

SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

COUNTERING MASS VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Investigating the applicability of situational crime prevention to the public mass violence context

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Research Summary: In this article, we argue that situational crime prevention (SCP) strategies can be used to prevent public mass violence, as well as to mitigate the harms caused from those attacks that still occur. We draw from the SCP perspective generally, and its application to terrorism particularly, as well as from the public mass violence literature. We focus on the pillars of opportunity that include target selection, weapon selection, tools used, and conditions that facilitate public mass violence attacks.

Policy Implications: We conclude that SCP's EVIL DONE risk assessment template could be refined for the public mass violence context. We argue that the exposed, occupied, nearer, and easy dimensions, along with a newly created personal grievance dimension, could be used to identify more at-risk settings that should receive more situational interventions to prevent these attacks. We similarly conclude that SCP's other pillars could be used to prevent these attacks. We outline specific hard and soft interventions that could thwart these attacks. Importantly, we use examples to illustrate that SCP's strategies could effectively mitigate the harms caused by public mass violence attacks that do occur. We also set forth research strategies to test our claims.

KEYWORDS

environmental criminology, mass shootings, preventing mass violence, situational crime prevention, terrorism

In this article, we argue that situational crime prevention (SCP) can be used to further our understanding of where and when public mass violence is likely to occur. Facilities, locations, and times that are more at risk for public mass violence should receive more situational interventions to prevent these attacks from occurring. We draw from the SCP perspective generally, and its application to terrorism particularly (Clarke & Newman, 2006; Freilich & Newman, 2009; Freilich, Gruenewald, & Mandala, 2019; Perry, Apel, Newman, & Clarke, 2017), as well as from the public mass shootings/mass violence literature. We focus on target selection and maintain that certain locations and facilities are more attractive and/or more vulnerable targets to attack. We also briefly engage weapon selection, tools, and the conditions that can facilitate public mass violence attacks. In addition, we explain how SCP strategies could prevent or reduce the number of mass violence attacks, as well as mitigate the harm caused from those attacks that still occur.

Criminologists have mostly ignored public mass violence until recently, and important gaps in our knowledge base remain (Fox & DeLateur, 2014; see also Bowers, Holmes, & Rhom, 2010; DeLisi & Scherer, 2006; Gill, Silver, Horgan, & Corner, 2017; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014; Liwerant, 2007). The recent increased attention to this issue is partially a result of rising levels of public concern that coincide with a growing number of high-profile incidents (Duwe, 2000, 2004, 2007; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009). Unfortunately, public mass violence is not new as cases date to the early twentieth century. Some conclude that the frequency of mass shooting homicides has increased (Bjelopera, Bagalman, Caldwell, Finklea, & McCallion, 2013; Follman, Pan, & Aronsen, 2019; Huff-Corzine et al., 2014). Capellan and Gomez (2018; see also Blair & Schweit, 2014; Silva, 2019) found that public mass shootings doubled from the 1984–1999 period to the 2000–2016 period. Others have countered that the number of mass shootings each year is barely a handful and that this number has remained stable. Because the number of public mass violence attacks is much fewer than the more than 14,000–15,000 homicides that occur each year in the United States, it is important to be cautious about interpreting yearly fluctuations.

This debate about the actual scope of the problem is partially a result of definitional issues (discussed in more detail later). Public mass violence events, however, receive celebrated publicity (Bjelopera et al., 2013; Chermak, 1995; Duwe, 2000, 2007; Gill et al., 2017; Meloy et al., 2004; Silva, 2019), and their impact on victims, communities, and the public policy debates over mental illness, gun control, and other proposed interventions is significant. Although policy makers, law enforcement personnel, and other officials have proposed solutions and recommendations on how best to respond to this seemingly growing social problem, the existing research findings have revealed little in terms of evidence-based solutions.

Only recently have researchers begun to unpack the characteristics of public mass shooting or mass violence incidents and perpetrators. Although some researchers have examined the characteristics of perpetrators of mass shootings (Fox & DeLateur, 2014; Gill et al., 2017; Hempel, Meloy, & Richards, 1999; Lankford, 2012; Meloy et al., 2004; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016), there has been *limited effort to understand the characteristics of environments* where mass violence events occur. Hindered by the absence of systematically collected empirical data, researchers to date have mostly overlooked the situational factors for mass violence, thus, stunting efforts to evaluate the efficacy of both situational etiological claims and their proposed policy interventions.

In this article, we begin to address this research gap. We first define the key terms of public mass violence. Second, we briefly review SCP arguments in general. Third, we highlight the growing literature on the application of SCP to the terrorism context. We discuss the lessons learned and illustrate how SCP could be used to identify which settings are more at risk for public mass violence. Fourth, we briefly discuss weapon selection, tools, and the conditions that facilitate public mass violence attacks. Fifth, we explain how SCP strategies could be used to both prevent public mass violence and mitigate the harm caused by those attacks that continue to occur. We conclude by pointing out original data

collection strategies, theoretical issues, empirical claims, and other issues that future research could be aimed at addressing.

1 | DEFINING PUBLIC MASS VIOLENCE

In most of the literature on public mass violence in the United States, scholars have examined public mass shootings. Bjelopera and colleague (2013, p. 35), in their Congressional Research Services' report on mass shootings, concluded that it is difficult "to determine the effectiveness of existing programs, law enforcement efforts, and make decisions about the fair distribution of resources without having a true understanding of the nature and scope of the problem [of public mass shootings]." Although media coverage is usually intense, there is little empirical understanding of the types of mass shooting events that have occurred. This confusion is driven partially by the lack of consensus on definitional inclusion criteria requirements (Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016; Silva & Greene-Colozzi, 2018). Therefore, we unpack the three key terms of *public*, *mass*, and *violence*.

We first focus on *public*, which refers to the location of the attack. We operationalize "public" broadly to include almost all settings that are outside a private home or residence or do not occur in a completely closed, inaccessible location or facility. In empirical studies on the location of mass shootings, attacks that occur in private residences are often excluded and incidents that occur inside facilities or at outdoor venues are examined instead (Capellan, 2015; Lankford, 2015; Newman, Fox, Roth, Mehta, & Harding, 2004; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016; Silva, 2019). Clarke and Eck (2007, p. 3) defined facilities as places "with specific public or private functions, such as stores, bars, restaurants, mobile home parks, bus stops, ATM locations, libraries, hospitals, schools, parking lots, railway stations, marinas and shopping malls," which matches our focus. By outdoor venues, we mean locations that are open to the public and are outside such as parks, sidewalks, roads, and yards (Rocque & Duwe, 2018).

Next, we turn to the term *mass*. The literature on public mass shootings is bewildering because researchers do not agree on how many victims qualify as a mass incident, as well as on what type of victimization is required to label it a mass attack. Some argue that mass attacks must include at least four victims (Fox & Levin, 1998; Gill et al., 2017; Roque & Duwe, 2018), others use three victims as the cut-off (Holmes & DeBurger, 1985, 1988; Holmes & Holmes, 1992, 2001; Meloy et al., 2004; Meloy, Hempel, Mohandie, Shiva, & Gray, 2001; Petee, Padgett, & York, 1997; Stanford Geospatial Center, 2016), and still others include fewer than three victims (Lester, Stack, Schmidtke, Schaller, & Müller, 2005; Messing & Heeren, 2004; Schildkraut, 2014; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Similar to other criminological contexts, the ultimate number of victims may hinge on factors like the type of protective measures in place, the government response time to an unfolding event, or the availability and effectiveness of medical staff and not on the offender's intent. There is thus some rationale for opting for a lesser number of required victims or compensating for this variability to make the best guess on intent.

Most definitions exclude the offender from the victim totals (if they are killed or wounded), but a few include them (Krouse & Richardson, 2015). In addition to debates about the numerical cut-off, scholars disagree about whether victims only refer to homicide victims (Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016). Since SCP, as we will discuss further, is also concerned with mitigating harm, an inclusive definition would allow for us to determine whether situational factors could decrease the impact of the event by limiting the number of killed while increasing the number of wounded. Recently, scholars have called for a further broadening of this definition to include foiled public mass violence plots that involve no actual victims. Instead, foiled plots require the offender to have planned and taken some action

toward committing an attack that, if successful, would kill at least three or four persons (depending on the selected number of victims' criteria). Although averted events may be more challenging to identify, they are especially useful for devising and testing prevention strategies. Certain SCP strategies, if successful, would anticipate a future decrease in completed mass attacks with a concomitant increase in averted/foiled plots by the police or others as a result of successful prevention interventions.

The third term to discuss is *violence*. Again, in the literature in the United States, scholars have mostly examined public mass shootings (committed with firearms) and have excluded nongun incidents (Roque & Duwe, 2018). Silver, Horgan, and Gill (2018), p. 96) recently found that 9 out of the 115 public mass murderers they identified used a nongun weapon. Importantly, as firearms are less available and/or less frequently used in other nations, a narrower focus could hamper future cross-national comparative analyses and arbitrarily restrict the focus to a U.S. context.

Finally, definitions often mandate that the attack occur within a 24-hour time frame to distinguish it from serial killings. Definitions also usually exclude attacks motivated by political grievances or profit such as robbery (Gill et al., 2017; Roque & Duwe, 2018; Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016, p. 24). These latter requirements, however, may not matter much from a situational prevention perspective where the goal is to prevent the offender from killing or injuring many persons in a single attack.

Based on this discussion, it seems crucial to collect information on a broad universe of cases to allow for researchers to compare a variety of event types. This variation is especially important for evaluating the impact of various SCP strategies. *We define public mass violence as willful acts of public (i.e., occurring in facilities or outdoor venues) violence occurring within a 24-hour period that harm, or are intended to harm, three or more individuals not including the offender* (Schildkraut & Elsass, 2016; Silva & Greene-Colozzi, 2018). This definition encapsulates all weapon types, including guns, knives, bombs, and so on. Also included are deadly and nondeadly outcomes with multiple fatalities as well as those with only multiple injured persons. Finally, these criteria include incidents with injuries or deaths, and averted or foiled mass attacks involving no deaths, no injury, and no victims at all, as well as attacks involving a variety of motivations such as personal vendettas, thrill-seeking, political or ideological goals, or greed.

2 | SCP

With SCP, rational decision-making and the dynamic nature of criminal participation are emphasized. Offending is purposeful (i.e., deliberate acts based on the offender's agency), and criminal events unfold sequentially in stages (Cornish & Clarke, 2008). It is a practical, policy-oriented approach aimed at reducing crime in the future (Clarke, 1980). The focus of SCP is on how offenders commit crime, and *specific crime types* should be examined to identify the situational characteristics that allow for the perpetrator to complete the crime successfully.

In other words, for crime to occur, according to SCP, there must be the opportunity to commit the offense. Opportunities vary across situations, and successful interventions often reduce the availability of these criminal opportunities (Clarke, 1980, 2012). Environments also differ in whether they create provocations (such as being fired from a job or bullied in school for example) or provide prompts or cues that situationally increase an individual's motivation to offend (Wortley, 2002).

To reduce crime, it is necessary to examine the environments and situations where crime occurs, as opposed to more distal issues like an offender's early childhood, or structural or cultural dysfunctions. Distal issues are important in terms of social justice, but from a crime prevention point of view, they are too far removed to impact the crime situation.

As SCP's popularity and its use has increased, many strategies have been identified and implemented that have reduced crime (Guerette & Bowers, 2009; Weisburd et al., 2006). Currently, five SCP strategies include 25 techniques to reduce crime. The techniques include both "hard" and "soft" interventions. Hard interventions include making it impossible or more difficult for the crime to be committed, or alerting potential perpetrators that they will be *immediately* apprehended if they transgress. Soft approaches seek to remove the environmental prompts or cues that provoke offenders to commit the crime.

With SCP, the crime-reduction role should be expanded beyond the formal criminal justice system (Freilich & Newman, 2018). Nongovernment entities, including private businesses and companies, groups/networks, or private individuals, are at times more situationally suited to take action to prevent crime. It is essential to identify who, in SCP's terms, owns the problem and, thus, may be best suited for devising interventions (Freilich & Newman, 2016; Laycock, 2005).

As Freilich and Newman (2014) explained, SCP interventions could lead to many results, thus, requiring broad data collection criteria to evaluate the efficacy of interventions across these different outcomes. The most successful SCP intervention would involve removing all opportunities or provocations that allow for the crime to occur and result in its elimination (i.e., *completely prevent* this type of crime). This goal is possible, although not usually achieved. Most SCP interventions instead are focused on *reducing the overall amount* of that specific crime.

As our earlier discussion anticipated, certain interventions may result in failing to either eliminate or reduce the number of offenses committed at the setting but still lead to a positive outcome by *mitigating the harms caused*. In the public mass violence context, whereas the number of attacks may not fall, the number of killed and injured could be reduced as a result of improved communication, response times, evacuation procedures, or the employment of protective devices like bulletproof glass to shield victims for example. With other SCP interventions, the problem may be somewhat similarly *intentionally displaced* to a different target, victim, location, or facility that is less crowded, concluding it will incur fewer casualties compared with a successful attack at the more crowded locale. Finally, with SCP, less interest is placed on *crime control responses* that only lead to an arrest if the underlying opportunities or provocations are not removed (Freilich & Newman, 2014).

Importantly, the findings from mass shooting research reveal that contrary to common assumptions, these attacks are rarely the result of an explosion of rage. Instead, mass shootings tend to be planned events (Fox & DeLateur, 2014; Fox & Levin, 2014) with the preparation sometimes lasting weeks or even months. Therefore, SCP strategies could be effective in these contexts. We now turn to the growing literature on SCP and terrorism to illustrate how these approaches could also prevent mass violence in public settings. We first focus on identifying which characteristics make some locations and venues more attractive and/or more vulnerable targets to attack. We also discuss weapons, tools, and the conditions that facilitate public mass violence attacks, as well as the mitigation strategies that could reduce the harms caused by attacks that still occur.

3 | SCP, TERRORISM, AND PREVENTING OR REDUCING PUBLIC MASS VIOLENCE

Clarke and Newman (2006) wrote the book on how the SCP approach could be followed to prevent and reduce terrorist attacks. Similar to crime, it is more effective from a prevention perspective to remove the opportunities that allow for terrorism to occur, as opposed to focusing on distal factors or eliminating all potential terrorists. Use of the SCP approach highlights the opportunity-structure of terrorism that includes four pillars of targets, weapons, tools, and facilitating conditions. A careful

examination of these pillars will both locate the opportunities that terrorists take advantage of and the factors that increase the terrorists' difficulty to complete the attack. We next discuss how these pillars could apply to the public mass violence context.

3.1 | Terrorism targets and public mass violence settings

The first pillar is the *target* that terrorists attack. A common critique against SCP is that it is too expensive, and almost impossible, to protect all targets from a potential terrorist attack. The SCP response is that not all targets are equally vulnerable and that a risk assessment approach could be used to identify and prioritize the most at-risk targets. This SCP argument is based on Clarke and Eck's (2007, pp. 4–5; see also Braga, 2003) earlier discussion about routine crime. They concluded that “one important principle of crime prevention holds that crime is highly concentrated among particular people, places, and things.... as this principle suggests, focusing resources on these concentrations is likely to yield the greatest preventive benefits.”

Clarke and Newman (2006) relied on this point to create the *EVIL DONE* terrorism risk assessment template. They argued that targets that are more **exposed**, **vital**, **iconic**, **legitimate**, **destructible**, **occupied**, **near** and **easy** are most at risk for a terrorist's attack. *Exposed* targets are more noticeable and visible, whereas *vital* targets deliver the necessities that allow for society to function such as electrical grids and water supplies. *Iconic* targets like the Congress or White House have special significance to society. *Legitimate* targets are more justifiable to attack like a soldier in uniform, as opposed to a baby sleeping in a private home at night. *Destructible* targets are, as suggested, easier to destroy, whereas *occupied* targets have more potential victims in them than other targets. *Nearer* targets require less distance to navigate and are closer to the terrorists and, thus, more at risk. *Easy* targets are less protected and more accessible than others. Clarke and Newman (2006) added that targets that involve more expected losses in terms of fatalities, injuries, and financial damages if attacked are more vulnerable than other targets. A thorough analysis of these dimensions will help us identify the most at-risk targets that must be prioritized for situational interventions.

We similarly argue that certain public settings—or parts of ones—at certain times are more at risk for a public mass violence incident. Researchers on public mass shootings have come to similar conclusions. Silva (2019) found that successful mass shooting attacks were not evenly distributed across facility types. More than 30% occurred in workplaces, more than 25% in bars and malls, and more than 20% in schools. Only 10% of attacks occurred outside, 6% occurred in government spaces, and less than 5% occurred in religious institutions. It seems plausible that government locations may have, as SCP indicates, greater security (or are hard targets) such as guards or metal detectors (see also Capellan & Silva, 2019).

We next discuss each dimension of EVIL DONE, assess the current state of empirical research, and extend its fundamental premises to the domain of public mass violence.

3.1.1 | Evil done and public mass violence

Clarke and Newman (2006) created EVIL DONE to identify which specific settings or physical structures, which are usually immobile, are at a heightened risk for a terrorist attack. For example, on 9/11, the terrorists' targets were the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (whose destruction and damage, respectively, killed some of their occupants). Public mass violence including mass shooting terrorist attacks, however, as we show later in this article, often target specific persons. These individuals are capable of mobility, but they may be located in specific settings, such as co-workers located in an offender's workplace. Sometimes offenders target the structure and want to kill the

persons at the setting. In other words, as Clarke and Eck's (2005) crime triangle highlights, locations and targets are distinct elements and are not interchangeable.

We find that EVIL DONE's exposed, occupied, nearer, and easy dimensions, along with a newly created personal grievance dimension, can identify which setting or parts of settings and times are more at risk for a public mass violence attack. Conversely, the vital, iconic, legitimate, and destructible dimensions are less useful for identifying which settings are more at risk.

In most studies, scholars have operationalized *exposed targets* by the degree to which the physical target is easily accessible and frequented by the general public (Gruenewald, Allison-Gruenewald, & Klein, 2015). Under this measurement scheme, the findings are mixed on the role of target exposure in shaping attack decisions. Using data from the American Terrorism Study (ATS), Gruenewald and colleagues (2015) showed that eco- and animal rights extremists often attack more exposed targets, such as local businesses, construction sites, and open areas (e.g., farms). Conversely, by using those same data on a sample of extreme right extremists, Klein, Gruenewald, and Smith (2016) found that successful attacks are unassociated with target exposure relative to failed and foiled far-right violence.

These disparate findings could be an artifact of how target exposure was operationalized. An alternative conceptualization of "exposed" may be useful for the public mass violence context. In the terrorism sphere, some like eco-extremists only seek to invoke physical damage on the target for symbolic or other reasons, and not cause deaths (although deaths often are the goal for jihadists and far-rightists). In the public mass violence context, by definition, however, the goal is to maximize fatalities and casualties. In other words, as noted, the primary focus is on people. Capellan (personal communication, March 7, 2019) and Silva (2019) both found that close to 40% of public mass shooters were "autogenic" where the attacker's motive was self-generated such as an outcome of mental health issues or a desire to achieve infamy or some type of glory (Lankford, 2016a; Lankford & Madfis, 2017). Another 40% (Silva, 2019) to 48% (Capellan, 2019) of shooters were victim specific, where the attackers initially targeted specific persons they believed had wronged them, or they had a grievance with, although they subsequently may have targeted others they did not know.

We thus reformulate exposure to account for the goal of mass casualties (i.e., the killing of specific targets/persons located at the setting). We propose that target exposure in the public mass violence context captures the specific part of a facility, or open setting, that is more exposed/open/visible for attack. This measure of exposure should also consider where more potential victims in a smaller amount of space are likely to be concentrated (i.e., the density of population). Therefore, for public mass violence, the exposure dimension requires a dynamic measurement to interact with the occupied (more on this later) and density dimensions among others.

This formulation is consistent with problem-oriented policing approaches in which the importance of a facility's physical layout, size, and density, both physical and population wise, have been highlighted (Clarke & Eck, 2007). Researchers have found that mass shooters usually target a single location that is often in a closely clustered area (Bjelopera et al., 2013; Fox & DeLatuer, 2014; Gill et al., 2017; Hempel et al., 1999; Langman, 2009; Lankford, 2013, 2015; Newman et al., 2004). Thus, attacks are seemingly less likely to occur in outdoor parks or indoor malls that are open (i.e., no barriers) settings where people are dispersed over a large area. Future research could be aimed at examining whether offenders' decisions are shaped more by where the highest number of people are concentrated (start the attack there) or whether the potential attackers first find the most exposed physical part of the setting and work from there.

According to Clarke and Newman (2006, p. 94), terrorists are more likely to choose *vital targets* "critical to a society's day-to-day functioning," such as electricity grids, pipelines, financial sectors, and railway, that are mostly physical immobile targets. This vital dimension, however, may not matter for public mass violence settings where more than 80% of offenders are responding to a personal grievance

or acting on self-generated motives such as chasing infamy. In both scenarios, the offenders seek to attack persons, who may be located at a setting, and maximize deaths, as opposed to striking a specific vital target.

Clarke and Newman (2006) argued that terrorists will strike *iconic targets*, which is a function of their ideology motivating them to attack (see also Becker, 2014; Drake, 1998). Evidence indicates that terrorists, in fact, often favor iconic and/or symbolic targets (Gruenewald et al., 2015; Marchment, Bouhana, & Gill, 2018). As noted, however, more than 80% of mass shootings in the United States are unrelated to politics and are instead motivated by grievances versus specific persons, or by a quest for infamy (Capellan, 2019; Osborne & Capellan, 2017; Silva, 2019). It is unlikely that iconic targets will play much of a role for public mass violence generally.¹

Victim-specific attackers (40% to 48% of all mass shooters) target defined persons they believe slighted them (Roque & Duwe, 2018; Silver et al., 2018). We thus advocate for replacing iconic with personal grievance and other attack motives like quest for fame or glory. Place managers of facilities and other locations should mimic the response to other problems and should identify and record the emergence of grievances. Dedel (2007), for example, in a problem-oriented policing guide on responding to drive-by shootings, called for tracking past and current altercations among rival gang members and others. Systematically collecting this information could help identify which settings and types of settings are more likely to generate grievances and thus may be more at risk for an attack.

Although Clarke and Newman (2006) maintained that terrorists stress *legitimate targets*, similar to the vital dimension, this may function differently in the public mass violence context. Extending Clarke and Newman's adage of "think terrorist," to "think like a public mass violence attacker," it makes sense to reformulate to encapsulate which victims or locations are legitimate to attack from the offender's perspective. This approach converges well with the victim-specific offenders' personal grievances we just discussed. As according to the attacker these victims are legitimate targets, it may be useful to collapse the legitimate dimension into the previously outlined grievance dimension.

Clarke and Newman (2006, p. 95) concluded that more *destructible targets* can be "seriously damaged if not utterly destroyed." To measure this concept, in the limited prior research, scholars have considered both the structural integrity of and the type of weaponry needed to destroy the target, finding that, in contrast to the tenets of SCP, terrorist incidents often involve *less* destructible targets (Gruenewald et al., 2015; Klein et al., 2016). Offering a somewhat different definition, Mandala and Freilich (2018) found that nongovernmental targets, considered to be less destructible more generally, are also unassociated with successful terrorist assassinations. Therefore, destructibility seems to refer to the ability to damage the physical locations (usually assuming the use of a bomb) or to eliminate a specific person (assassination).

This dimension may be less relevant for the public mass violence setting where, again, the focus is less on a physical target, and the goal is to kill at least three, four, or more persons. Instead, this dimension converges with both the type of weapon used (i.e., a weapon that can easily be used to kill many individuals) and that the setting includes the necessary number of potential victims (more on this later). Most public mass violence attackers will use a type of firearm, often a handgun, especially when compared with a knife. Guns are usually used to kill large numbers of persons and are widely available. (Silver et al., 2018).

Clarke and Newman (2006) stated that *occupied targets*, with more potential victims are more at risk for an attack. Because by definition public mass violence attackers seek to kill at least three or four victims, the targeted setting must be occupied. Again, it makes sense to refine this dimension for the public mass violence context by highlighting *which part* of the setting is more occupied, in a smaller amount of space (crowded and denser), as well as *when the setting is so populated*. "When" includes

time of day, as well as the time of year or month. For example, schools may be less crowded over summer or winter break or at night.

Clarke and Newman (2006) argued that terrorists are more likely to strike *nearer targets* that are closer to them geographically. Researchers have supported this claim in a variety of conflicts including those perpetrated by American, Palestinian, Turkish, and other terrorists (Berrebi & Lakdawalla, 2007; Cothren, Smith, Roberts, & Damphousse, 2008; Klein et al., 2016; Rossmo & Harries, 2011). This dimension also has applicability for the public mass violence context. It may be risky for autogenic mass attackers to choose a distant target that requires them to drive for an extended period or to use a cab or public transportation to travel to the target while possessing guns, given police patrols and other unforeseen obstacles they may encounter. Additionally, as victim-specific attackers know their victims and select specific facilities or locations these individuals frequent to target, it seems unlikely the attackers would need to travel long distances.

Clarke and Newman (2006) stated that *easy targets* are more accessible and have fewer protections in place. This dimension also seems applicable to the public mass violence setting especially for those attackers seeking to escape alive. These attackers may be more likely to target facilities near major thoroughfares or other easy-to-access escape routes. Furthermore, public mass attackers may seek out the most accessible part of the facility or setting that is crowded with their intended victims. Targeting decisions may also depend on the level of physical and personal security measures present at the facility or location.

In sum, use of this revised risk assessment template will aid in identifying which settings and locations, and when (during the year, month, week, and day as well as time of day, etc.), are more at risk for a public mass violence attack. Once at-risk locations and times are identified, both hard and soft situational measures could be employed to prevent and/or make the attack more difficult to complete.

Hard interventions include obvious strategies like installing CCTV cameras or metal detectors in the most at-risk parts of the settings. Another readily apparent strategy is to employ private security guards when locations and settings are most crowded. The most vulnerable times include the heart of the work or school day, when credible threats exist, as well as when special events that also attract crowds like concerts, rallies, or fairs in indoor arenas or outdoor squares or parks occur. Place managers could assess their locations, and if they find many persons clustered in small amounts of space, they could reconfigure the setting to disperse everybody over a larger area to reduce crowding. For outdoor venues, similar strategies include crowd control techniques to minimize large numbers of persons in smaller amounts of space.

Other interventions include installing barriers like doors that lock or buzzers, or require a pass or specialized ID, to limit easy access to the entire crowded part of the setting. Similar strategies applied to outdoor setting encompass physical barriers and other strategies again to minimize large crowds in small amounts of space, as well as to hinder easy access to and mobility over the entire space. Although completely thwarting an attacker's mobility and roaming is the primary goal, just slowing him or her down for a few minutes may prevent or mitigate these attacks. Most public mass violence attacks last less than 30 minutes and many only take three or four minutes or less from beginning to end (Greene-Colozzi, 2019; Osborne & Capellan, 2017).

Additional strategies include installing bulletproof glass or other bullet-resistant products, as well as creating easily accessible and protected hiding places that have secure locks, and are bullet resistant, among other things. These suggestions are obvious, but as we discuss later, careful reviews of each at-risk setting will identify unique vulnerabilities that in turn should lead to tailored responses to remove the opportunities that make it easier to commit the attack.

To evaluate these claim, researchers will need to devise objective attributes to measure target security (such as locked doors, bulletproof glass, metal detectors, cameras) at various parts of the overall facility.

It may make sense to create interactive dynamic measures to capture all four of the easy, occupied, exposed, and near dimensions.

Soft interventions include policies to respond to offenders' personal grievances (discussed earlier). Once again, place managers have a key prevention role (Madensen & Eck, 2008). Policy makers and researchers should devise policies to prevent or reduce the emergence of grievances in workplaces, schools, and similar venues (which encompass more than half of all public mass violence incidents). Again, policies should take into account the location's specific context.

Researchers find that public mass violence offenders often "leak" (i.e., provide warnings of) their future plans to attack (Bondu & Scheithauer, 2015; Gill et al., 2017; Meloy et al., 2001; Silver et al., 2018; Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000; Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein, Borum, & Modezeleski, 2000). Systematically tracking warnings and where they occur will identify which types of settings and policies are more likely to generate leakage relative to others. This information has clear implications for situational prevention interventions.

Finally, it is important to investigate distance to target (i.e., the nearness element) as criminologists have done in the terrorism context. Drawing on the discrete choice spatial modeling approach (Bernasco & Nieuwebeerta, 2005), Marchment and Gill (2019) measured the Euclidean distance between the offender's home and target area, finding that the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was less likely to choose attack areas located farther away. It may also be useful to expand nearness to include the attacker's personal "familiarity" with the setting as an indicator of his or her "awareness space" (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984). Familiarity could include if the attacker currently or previously worked at the location, or regularly frequented it, or if he or she conducted surveillance of the setting either physically or online.

Other factors to consider are natural barriers that may impede travel, such as major bodies of water or woodlands, as well as the ease of accessibility to and from the targeted site via major highways, streets, sidewalks, railways, or other thoroughfare's and routes (see earlier discussion; Brantingham & Brantingham, 2008; Johnson & Bowers, 2010; Johnson & Summers, 2015; Marchment & Gill, 2019). Lastly, an understudied aspect of the near dimension is the method of transport offenders use to reach the target location. Traveling exposed for longer periods by bicycle may be riskier than using a personal vehicle (Marchment & Gill, 2019). It may be fruitful for researchers to consider the role of transportation type (e.g., walk, bicycle, car, bus, train) on shaping the distance traveled to the locations of possible mass violence, and then using this information to devise interventions.

3.2 | Weapons, tools, facilitating conditions, and public mass violence

We now briefly turn to the other three pillars of the terrorism opportunity structure. Clarke and Newman (2006) argued that terrorists are more likely to use weapons that are adaptable to a variety of settings (*multipurpose*), are not noticeable (*undetectable*), are not difficult to transport (*removable*), can easily harm others (*destructive*), provide enjoyment (*enjoyable*), are *reliable in that they will usually work*, are not difficult to use and do not require specialized training (*uncomplicated*), and are generally not dangerous (but *safe*). Because terrorists are more likely to use weapons with these dimensions, intervention strategies should prevent terrorists from obtaining these weapons. Freilich et al. (2019) found that in barely a handful of studies have scholars empirically investigated these claims, but the few that did so were supportive (Legault & Hendrickson, 2009; Mandala, 2017).

These arguments seem well suited to explicate which types of weapons are more likely to be used to commit public mass violence. We briefly discussed weapons in the target selection section. There is little variation as the overwhelming numbers of mass attackers use guns (Gill et al., 2017). It would make sense, however, to extend this dimension. Researchers should investigate whether offenders

used legally or illegally acquired firearms, how the weapons were acquired, the types of firearms or other weapon used, whether more than one type of weapon was used and if so how many and which ones, whether/how the weapons were modified to increase lethality, and what type of ammunition was employed, the size of the bullet/magazine, how it was acquired (again legally or illegally), how long it takes to shoot, how long it takes to reload. and for bombs what type of explosives were used, and if/how the ammunition was modified to increase deadliness, as well as if any specific type of explosive is associated with higher numbers of casualties (see also Koper, 2020, this issue). This information could be used to create a scale of overall weapon deadliness (Taylor, 2018). Assault weapons with “bump” stocks are more murderous, as the recent deadly incident in Las Vegas illustrated, than those without, for example (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, 2019). In addition, it is important to consider the use of other weapons in carrying on mass attacks and to compare these types of incidents with those with guns.

The *tools* terrorists use to carry out their attacks are the third pillar of terrorism opportunity (Clarke & Newman, 2006). Common tools include money (to buy weapons for example), identity documents to gain access to weapons or a location, or vehicles to travel. Terrorists who possess these tools are better equipped, it is argued, to succeed in their attacks. Effective SCP strategies would hinder terrorists from acquiring these tools. Researchers that examine terrorists’ preparatory activities prior to the terrorist events often highlight the acquisition and use of tools, as well as other strategic actions the terrorist take to commit such acts. For example, McVeigh robbed gun dealers to raise funds to help him prepare for the subsequent 1995 Oklahoma City bombing (Hamm, 1997).

This pillar also seems to transfer well to public mass violence as attackers may have to do several preparatory steps before attempting the crime, including evaluating targets, surveillance, and test runs of the crime. They may also require money and certain identity documents or permits to purchase guns, or explosives, and take possession of them. Researchers to date have mostly ignored this pillar of mass public violence. It would be interesting to document the number and types of tools and preparatory acts used or needed to carry out certain types of mass violence attacks.

The final pillar of the terrorism opportunity structure is *facilitating conditions*. Clarke and Newman (2006) created another template summarized by the *ESEER* acronym in which the five factors comprising this dimension are captured. These factors encompass *easy* conditions such as a jurisdiction where corruption is rampant, *safe* conditions where there is little oversight or regulations in place (for, e.g., limited identification regulations), *excusable* conditions such as harsh government reactions to terrorism that increase sympathy for the terrorists, *enticing* conditions (e.g., community support for terrorists actions), and *rewarding* conditions that could include financial or social status rewards. Clarke and Newman pointed to banking and immigration laws as examples of facilitating conditions. Importantly, even though many of these factors seem to touch on distal issues, all impact situations. Wortley (1996) and Freilich and Chermak (2009) have explained how distal factors like guilt and an extremist political ideology also have important situational influences.

This pillar is also applicable to the public mass violence setting. Many mass shooters suffer from mental health and substance abuse problems, fantasize about graphically violent entertainment, possess a warrior mentality, are interested in weapons, and were previously involved in domestic violence and/or routine crime generally (Bjelopera et al., 2013; Fox & DeLateur, 2014; Gill et al., 2017; Hempel et al., 1999; Langman, 2009; Lankford, 2013, 2015; Lemieux, 2014; Meloy et al., 2001; Newman et al., 2004; Silva, 2019).

Guns laws vary by state (Zeoli & Paruk, 2020, this issue), and social media platforms vary in the regulations they have in place on live streaming an event, publicizing bomb making or similar types of instructions, and publishing manifestos and justifications by the attacker. Similarly, there is state-level variation in the types of laws governing the ability of those suffering from mental illness, as well

as domestic violence offenders (who have been found to be involved in several public mass violence attacks), to legally acquire or access firearms (Silva, 2019; Zeoli & Paruk, 2020).

Other community-level conditions that decrease the rewards of committing mass attacks would deny the offenders' the glory or infamy they seek. Lankford and Madfis (2017) and others called for the media and others not to name mass killers publicly (the no notoriety campaign), and this policy was implemented after the recent New Zealand public mass violence attack by a neo-Nazi in a Mosque (Owen, 2019). But even though in a no notoriety campaign, not naming the offender is stressed, it is unclear how this policy works for attacks in which the goal is to publicize neo-Nazi, ISIS, or other extremist beliefs. Should the media also not report the ideological motivation to deny the offender this reward? In certain American cases the media highlighted the offenders' extremist beliefs. Recently, though, the New Zealand media did not name the offender who committed the Mosque massacre, and local media outlets promised to minimize coverage of the perpetrator's neo-Nazi ideology (Owen, 2019). Finally, future research should be aimed at examining whether other laws and policies (like reducing school suspensions and the reporting of school crimes to the police) are also relevant for situationally preventing mass attacks.

4 | SCP AND MITIGATING THE HARMS CAUSED BY PUBLIC MASS VIOLENCE

As discussed, even though SCP strategies seek to eliminate, or at least reduce, the number of public mass violence attacks, they may not always succeed. SCP proponents therefore also focus on *mitigating the harms caused* by those attacks that continue to occur. Certain SCP interventions like bulletproof glass, having the necessary equipment and supplies on hand and easily accessible, an enhanced communication system, and improved emergency response times may result in fewer casualties during public mass violence attacks. Here we briefly discuss Newman and Clarke's (2007) policing terrorism guide in which in the last 15 modules, they explained how law enforcement and others could mitigate the harms caused by completed terrorist attacks. We discuss how the results of these analyses are applicable to the overall public mass violence context.

Newman and Clarke (2007) argued that the local police, along with the place managers of non-government settings including businesses, private companies, religious institutions, and others have a key role to play in both preventing and mitigating the harms caused by terrorist attacks. As invariably it will be local—and not federal—police that initially respond to a terrorist attack, they must be proactive and ensure they are prepared for assuming responsibility for an attack, including a worst-case scenario. These agencies must have contingency plans for leading and coordinating the response by the various government and private-sector institutions (such as the attacked setting, EMT, fire department, medical personnel, hospitals, trauma centers, volunteers, journalists, etc.) that will respond to a terrorist attack. It is important to remember that such events are initially often chaotic, with key facts unknown and incorrect information circulated. Newman and Clarke (2007) therefore outlined efforts to focus on stopping the perpetrator, quickly providing the victims the aid they need, and communicating with the public to dispel fears and concerns.

Newman and Clarke (2007) argued that law enforcement must first carefully identify all relevant agencies in their jurisdiction that will respond to an attack. Police must also set up channels (i.e., identifying contacts at each agency's headquarters as well as with the first responders to the attack) and ensure they have the proper equipment for effective communication among all the agencies. The police and other first responders must also make sure their personnel are trained in trauma response. Furthermore, these agencies must have trauma kits and other necessary equipment on hand to try to

save more lives, as well as be trained to evacuate the wounded swiftly to hospitals. It is important to map out the location of vulnerable settings (see earlier) and the locations of hospitals and trauma centers, as well as the quickest route to each. All relevant agencies (first responders, ambulances, etc.) must have this information, as well as where emergency vehicles should park with backup plans in case of unexpected developments and where transportation resources like ambulances should load patients, and so on.

Local police must engage in careful planning and training and consider conducting emergency drills that include getting officers and other responders to an attacked site, making sure the proposed interagency command structures function as planned, implementing the disaster/mitigation response including proper coordination and effective communication among all involved agencies, and evacuating casualties. The goal is to ensure that response procedures, communication equipment, and other equipment work as planned. These drills will help them identify gaps and deficiencies in the contingency plans that could then be corrected.

Information sharing is the key because the early stages of an attack are usually confusing and often first reports are incorrect. On the settings side, it is important for place managers and others to reach out to the police to establish communication channels, such as identifying specific contact persons, in the event of the attack, as well as to arrange emergency drills and safety briefings.

These claims are all relevant for the public mass violence setting. For instance, in the after report on the public mass violence attack at the Fort Lauderdale airport in January 2017 in which 6 people were killed and more than 30 wounded, it was concluded that a uniformed command was never established and the lack of certainty about who was in charge hindered the response to this incident (Broward County Aviation Department, 2017). Similarly, in the after report on the February 2018 public mass violence attack at a high school in Parkland in which 17 were killed and 17 wounded, the uncoordinated and inefficient response was highlighted, as well as the lack of strong preexisting relationships and collaborative planning across the responding agencies (Straub et al., 2019). Meanwhile, in the after report on the Boston Marathon bombing, an effective unified response was singled out as one of the successful aspects to the response to that public mass violence attack (After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings, 2014).

In the after report on the June 2016 mass public violence attack at the Pulse night club in Orlando in which 49 were killed and 53 wounded, Newman and Clarke's (2007) claims were supported. The authors of the report pointed out that the Orlando Police Department leveraged its well-established relationships with other local, state, and federal agencies in responding to this incident. The department was also singled out in the report for having training policies in place on how to respond and ensure that their officers and other responders were properly equipped (Straub et al., 2017). On the other hand, in the after report on the Boston Marathon bombing, it was found that there was a lack of weapons discipline by police officers in encounters with the offenders after the bombing. Lax and incorrect weapons use during the response to these chaotic events has the potential to cause more casualties (After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings, 2014). Thus, implementation of well-designed training procedures and policies could ensure that officers properly use their weapon and thereby prevent additional deaths and injuries.

The recent mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018 in which 11 were killed and 6 wounded also illustrated many of Newman and Clarke's (2007) points. The Synagogue's Rabbi had recently been trained by authorities and encouraged to keep his phone on during Saturday services, even though observant Jews normally refrain from using electrical devices during the Sabbath. The Rabbi's access to and use of his cell phone made it possible for him to contact the authorities via 911 even as the attack unfolded. Indeed, the Rabbi contacted the authorities and provided real-time information about the shooter's movements during the attack. Emergency procedures

that provide place managers like the Rabbi with designated police hotlines set aside for mass violence attacks might also be useful strategies to consider. In addition, during the prior trainings, the Rabbi was instructed to make sure specific doors were unlocked to aid those seeking to escape a security situation, and in fact, those open doors worked as planned and helped worshippers flee (Goodwin, 2018).

Other recent public mass violence attacks reveal the importance of conducting regular emergency practice drills to make sure that communication among responding agencies and responders' trauma kits and other equipment work as planned, the evacuation of casualties proceed as intended, and responders do not run out of equipment or supplies. The October 2017 outdoor mass shooting attack in which 58 persons were killed and more than 400 wounded in Las Vegas provides a vivid example of the need to have enough supplies on hand to save lives. In the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police After Report on that horrific attack, it was found that although, as a result of the 2013 Boston marathon bombing they distributed almost 2,300 tourniquets (bandages used to stop bleeding) to their police cars and motorcycles, they ran out of them during this attack because of the almost 500 victims and the limited numbers of officers initially on the scene. As a result, responders used makeshift tools like belts, shirts, and similar items to stem the bleeding of many of the badly wounded victims. Significantly, stemming the loss of blood quickly enough will save lives; thus, having enough on hand is a key situational intervention (Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, 2019).

The same principle applies to having a sufficient number of ambulances or other vehicles available to transport the wounded as quickly as possible to hospitals. The July 2012 mass shooting in Aurora, Colorado, in which 12 were killed and 70 others wounded, including 58 with gunshot wounds, illustrates this point. In the after action report on this attack, it was found that poor communication between the police department, fire department, and other agencies contributed to the confusion that reigned as agencies responded to the attack. Victims running for safety, parked police cars, and other obstacles led to further uncertainty, and responding ambulances were unable to reach the wounded victims. As a result, the police decided on their own to collect the wounded into their cars and transport them to hospitals, while other victims were evacuated in private cars. Indeed, the findings of the report indicate that the police cars transported more victims (27) than ambulances (20) to hospitals. If the police had not acted, therefore, more victims would have perished (TriData Division, System Planning Corporation, 2014).

The 2013 Boston Marathon bombing attack similarly demonstrates the efficacy of having plans in place for emergency responders, transportation resources, and loading of patients. In this attack, the bombs happened to explode close to where EMT personnel were located; thus, the authorities responded quickly in transporting victims to hospitals and saved countless lives (After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings, 2014). Although this was happenstance, it along with the Aurora attack discussed earlier demonstrates the importance of effective communication channels among agencies, and having a well-conceived evacuation plan, as outlined earlier, in place. In addition to making sure there are enough supplies and equipment, agencies must map out the quickest routes from potential settings to hospitals. The police and transportation officials, for vulnerable settings, could consider using road closures, and/or bypass roads, to facilitate the fastest travel time to the specified trauma centers.

Again, it is important to conduct real-world practice drills to make sure response plans function as planned. Practice drills, for example, could identify whether decision-making is hampered by situational issues, such as difficulties in reaching designated hiding places; an inability to lock doors (or open locked offices); and uncertainty of knowing physically where the potential shooter is. Place managers and others could then refine their strategies and policies to address these identified gaps.

Certain strategies to prevent attacks might initially conflict with other interventions to mitigate harms. For example, situational interventions might use *locked doors to thwart* those with the intent

to attack. On the other hand, as noted, *unlocked doors* could aid those seeking to *escape*. This is why real-world drills and proactive planning are so important in identifying potential conflicts and helping officials think through how to address them. For instance, in the example just raised, having a place manager or designated official know which doors are initially locked for prevention purposes, as well as which doors/buttons need to be/unlocked pressed to aid those seeking to flee, could ensure that both prevention and mitigation strategies are properly implemented. Future research could be aimed at exploring this potential conflict.

Finally, and as noted, as many public mass violence attacks occur in workplaces, or in a few cases religious institutions, the role of private companies, businesses, and their place managers—in addition to the police and government officials—are crucial for implementing successful mitigation, and prevention, strategies.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We argued in this article that the SCP approaches are valuable for thinking about ways to respond to mass violence. We examined the growing body of research on SCP and terrorism and focused on the pillars of opportunity that include target selection in terms of identifying which specific locations, facilities, and other related characteristics make them more attractive and/or more vulnerable targets to attack. We briefly discussed weapon selection, tools, and conditions that facilitate public mass violent attacks. We also discussed how SCP strategies could prevent, or reduce, these attacks and/or mitigate the harm caused by successful attacks.

We conclude by identifying key gaps and questions related to the target (EVIL DONE) that could be addressed empirically to move this discussion forward in way that parallels what occurred in the study of terrorism. Future research could likewise be focused on engaging the other pillars and mitigation strategies.

Table 1 includes these issues, and we now briefly discuss a few of them.

We argued that EVIL DONE could be modified to assess where/when public mass violence is more likely to occur. The most relevant dimensions are exposed, occupied, near, and easy (see Table 1). Consider the exposure dimension and how a more nuanced understanding of a location or facility's exposure of public space can help identify which ones are most vulnerable to attack. The access to public space varies by time of the day (e.g., an open park might be closed in the evening), by opportunity (e.g., there are many public spaces that can be accessed by invitation or by paying to access it), and by the configuration of that public space (e.g., often various parts of place limit access to employees or are controlled by the place manager or have a guardian present). The number of "checkpoints" and hard SCP strategies within facilities will vary based on an evaluation of the security threat as well as on how the owner or manager of that facility decides to respond to that evaluation. The following critical questions would be valuable to thinking about the relationship between space and mass shooting:

- *Does target exposure condition decisions to attack specific areas of a facility and/or open-space versus others?*
- *What objective indicators tap into the construct "target visibility"?*
- *What is the relationship between target exposure and "occupied"? Do offenders first choose more visible/open areas, then attack the spaces with the highest concentration of victims, or vice-a-versa? Do victims move to least visible spaces?*

TABLE 1 Target selection pillar of the public mass violence opportunity structure and proposed directions for future research

Pillar of Mass Violence Opportunity		Definition	Future Research Aims
<i>Target Attractiveness & Vulnerability</i>			
Exposed Targets	Measures the extent to which the specific part of a facility or open setting is visible or open to an attack. Consideration should be given here to the physical size and layout of a facility/open area, as well as to its population density, specifically its relationship to the “occupied” dimension (see below).		<p>Does target exposure condition decisions to attack specific areas of a facility and/or open-space versus others?</p> <p>What objective indicators tap into the construct “target visibility”?</p> <p>What is the relationship between target exposure and “occupied”? Do offenders first choose more visible/open areas, then attack the spaces with the highest concentration of victims, or vice versa?</p>
Occupied Targets	Measures (a) the specific part of a facility/open setting that is more occupied in a smaller amount of space and (b) when the space is so populated.		<p>How are offenders’ decisions shaped by where and when the highest density of people is concentrated?</p> <p>What is the relationship between occupied, “target exposure,” and other attributes of target activeness and vulnerability?</p>
Nearer Targets	Measures the distance between the offender’s residence and facility/open space. Additional consideration should be given here to physical/natural barriers, modes of transport, target connectivity (e.g., roads, railways), and offenders’ familiarity with the target.		<p>Is a “distance decay” function observed? That is, does the likelihood of an attack decrease as distance to the target increases?</p> <p>Do natural/physical barriers decrease the likelihood that a facility/open area will be chosen?</p> <p>Does access to major thoroughfares and routes increase the likelihood that a facility/open area will be chosen?</p> <p>What role do both barriers and connectivity play on distance traveled?</p> <p>What are the indicators of “familiarity,” and how does this impact distance traveled and decisions to attack?</p>

Empirically addressing these and other questions listed Table 1 may be difficult because of the limitations of data and methodology. One option, however, is to conduct case control studies in which attacked to matched nonattacked venues and locations were compared. Another option would be to look at comparisons of attacked locations to other locations that the offender considered for an attack but never acted on, as well as completed to foiled attacks. These strategies would uncover whether SCP strategies were effective in reducing the likelihood of an attack. In addition, scholars should investigate whether our risk assessment dimensions are equally relevant or whether some matter more and should be weighted accordingly (Freilich et al., 2019).

Future research should also be aimed at studying whether SCP strategies could mitigate the harm caused. Again, we highlight the value of the “easy” construct, which pertains directly to the security measures that are used at the location to first divert an attack or reduce the harm caused by it. The following questions are worth answering:

- *How accessible is the facility/open space?*
- *What personal and physical security measures are in place?*
- *Does security condition decisions to attack specific areas of a facility and/or open-space versus others?*
- *What is the relationship between easy targets, “nearer” targets, and other attributes of target attractiveness and vulnerability?*

For example, we are currently involved in a study funded by the National Institute of Justice in which we will explore school shootings, comparing fatal school shooting attacks to shootings at schools that only resulted in injuries (Freilich, Chermak, & Connell, 2017). We will explore how specific security mechanisms, like metal detectors, bulletproof glass, and locked doors for example, as well as police and EMT response times and actions at the setting might mitigate the harm caused. Moreover, we will explore what types of preparatory activities occurred in that school in terms of planning for an attack.

Importantly, SCP preventions are not static but are dynamic processes. Many offenders are rational, so they will eventually adapt and respond to successful interventions by changing their goals and/or behaviors. Therefore, there must be ongoing assessments of the problem, evaluations of interventions’ effectiveness, and a recognition that policies must similarly evolve to respond to offenders’ changing strategies.

With SCP, often interventions are used to respond to past problems and their unique characteristics. The most difficult SCP strategy is to identify opportunities and weaknesses and to *respond to them before an attack is committed*. Researchers and others confronting theft have begun to do so, as evidenced by Ekblom (2012) and others who have worked to design against crime (DAC). DAC involves identifying a product’s characteristics that make it vulnerable to theft and then fixing it before the product is placed on the market. This is obviously difficult, but place managers, and others charged with securing facilities and other venues, must try to anticipate future adaptation by potential mass attackers. Systematic interviews with completed/successful public mass violence offenders, police, and other experts charged with thwarting them, as well as employing machine learning and predictive modeling might prove useful in this regard. In addition, place managers should periodically review the physical layout of their setting and carry out real-life safety drills, as well as conduct online searches to discover what information and pictures are publically available about their setting. These actions could identify security gaps or other vulnerabilities in terms of prevention and mitigation that could then be addressed.

Similarly, police departments, place managers, and others should make use of the after action reports on major public mass violence attacks. In many of these reports, gaps that contributed to the attack, which responses worked well, and which strategies must be improved are identified, and the reports are freely available for downloading from the National Police Foundation's website and other sources. We have referenced some of these reports to show support for our claims. First responders, place managers, and others must review these after action reports. These reports will help them identify vulnerabilities in their own facility or target and will help them to refine their own drills and training plans. In fact, in the after action report on the public mass violence attack in San Bernardino in 2015 in which 14 were killed and 22 wounded, it was concluded that one reason for the effective response to this attack was because "San Bernardino area first responders and leaders studied and applied collective lessons learned from critical incident reviews, including the 2013 review of the attacks by Christopher Dorner.... The resulting adjustments to response protocols improved their coordination and response to the San Bernardino terrorist attacks. The ability to critically analyze incident response, identify areas of improvement, and make adjustments to protocol and practice is key to strengthening response not only locally but also for public responders nationwide" (Braziel, Straub, Watson, & Hoops, 2016, p. XV).

Finally, we have discussed SCP and public mass violence in general to make the argument that this approach has an important role to play in preventing and mitigating these attacks. SCP, however, has long called for focusing on specific types of crime. For example, car thefts occurring at public parking lots in the city center likely differ from those committed at garages in the suburbs because of varying opportunity structures. Similarly, the preventive and mitigation measures employed will likely vary with the specific type of public mass violence addressed simply because the opportunity structure of each may differ considerably. We recognize that raising this point runs the risk of complicating the application of SCP to public mass violence. But doing something practical to prevent or mitigate these problems requires deep and systematic analysis. We believe that our revised EVIL DONE template and mitigation arguments could result in some immediate successful prevention and mitigation interventions. Improving on these initial interventions, however, might need considerably more analysis and research. It may be that researchers will find that several key situational variables are involved in most important kinds of mass public violence, but that specific forms need to attend to some additional unique situational contingencies.

ENDNOTE

¹ Certain mass shooters have referenced the 1999 Columbine school shooting as the inspiration for their own attack. Future research should be designed to investigate if/how often attackers select schools as a result of Columbine or other targets for similar reason (Greene-Colozzi, 2019).

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